



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on CIS Astana Summit Declaration on the OSCE

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 23, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We very much appreciate the opportunity to comment on the very helpful information provided to us by the distinguished Russian ambassador concerning the statement adopted by representatives of eight governments at the recent CIS Summit in Astana. The United States welcomes the great interest that these governments have demonstrated in the affairs of the OSCE, and we fully trust that that signals their desire for fruitful cooperation as the OSCE continues to address issues of concern to participating States, and to ensure adequate funding of that work.

However, as we stated in response to the statement of some CIS leaders from July 3, the United States respectfully disagrees with the characterizations of OSCE work in the Astana statement.

Over the past few years, for example, the United States, the EU and other states have worked to develop new OSCE initiatives in the political-military and economic dimensions. This does not and must not detract, however, from the unique and the vital role that the OSCE, through its field missions and ODIHR, plays in promoting democratization and respect for human rights.

We all agreed at the Istanbul summit in 1999 and last year in the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the 21st Century that "Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law is at the core of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security."

We dispute the claim that there are double standards when it comes to monitoring the fulfillment of commitments concerning democracy and human rights; all OSCE members voluntarily pledged to uphold the same commitments that comprise a single standard for all. Ensuring compliance with those commitments should not be seen as a transgression by OSCE and its institutions, nor as an annoyance, but as a very important part of the OSCE's core mission.

As our [U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Elizabeth Jones](#) stated in testimony before Congress last week, the text and [transcript](#) of which we will be making available to all delegations today, the value of the OSCE to the U.S. is incontrovertible. Its flexible and comprehensive approach to security recognizes democracy and human rights as well as economic and environmental issues as integral and closely related factors in fostering and security and stability. Its field missions are on the front lines of democracy and human rights from the Balkans to Central Asia. OSCE's work in fighting all forms of intolerance has become the

standard by which other organizations' efforts are measured. OSCE election observation missions are well-known and respected for their impartial, sound judgment.

We look forward to productive discussions this autumn of the work of the OSCE in the working group chaired by Ambassador Bota, and of how the OSCE might be further strengthened so as to maintain its extraordinary capability, as well as its comparative advantage, in promoting stability and security.

But, we want to be clear – commitments all participating States made regarding human rights and democratic freedoms form the basis of the OSCE's role in the Euro-Atlantic security architecture. Erosion of commitment to those values – values which, I might add, are shared by other Euro-Atlantic organizations – would threaten the interests of all OSCE members and we are confident that our CIS colleagues firmly join the rest of us in their commitment that this does not happen.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.